Development of Buddhist Pilgrimage

†1363. SHRI RAGHAVJI: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) the details of places in the country which have been identified as Buddhist Pilgrimage and the steps proposed to be taken for development of such places from the tourism point of view; and

(b) the number of foreign tourists visited at each of the Buddhist pilgrimage during the last three years alongwith the steps being taken to encourage the foreign tourists at such places?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (KUMARI UMA BHARATI): (a) Identification and development of tourist spots is primarily the responsiblity of the State Governments. Ministry of Tourism, Government of India extends financial assistance to State/Union Territory Governments on the basis of specific project proposals received from them based on their merits, inter-se-priority and availability of funds.

The Government of India has developed the Buddhist Circuit of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar & Ajanta & Ellora with the assistance of Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF) loan from Japan. In addition, the Ministry of Tourism has also provided Central Financial Assistance for development of tourism infrastructure for the following Buddhist places in the country:—

Uttar Pradesh

(i) Piprahawa, Sarnath, Sarvasti, Kushinagar

Madhya Pradesh

(i) Sanchi

Sikkim

(i) Lachung, Phodong, Pamayantse and Tashiding

Andhra Pradesh

(i) Nagarjunasagar

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†Original notice of the question received in Hindi.

Arunachal Pradesh

(i) Tawang Monastery, Tawang

Orissa

(i) Dhauli, Lalitgiri, Udaigiri & Ratnagiri

Maharashtra

(i) Ajanta & Ellora, & Karla

Bihar

(i) Bodhgaya, Nalanda, Rajgir & Vaishali

Jammu & Kashmir

(i) Hemis & Pethub Monasteries and Choglamser in Leh

Himachal Pradesh

(i) Tabo/Kaza

The funds sanctioned for the development of these places amount to Rs. 1259.31 lakhs till date.

(b) Foreign tourist arrivals to the country including places of Buddhist interest are as follows:—

1996	1997	1998
22,87,860	23,74,094	23,58,629

Ministry of Tourism in collaboration with the State Governments of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar organised Baudha Mahotsav during 1998 and 1999 at Sarnath (Varanasi) and at Bodh Gaya, in order to promote Buddhist pilgrimage to India. During the Mahotsav seminars, discourses and cultural events were also organised. Brochures, posters and compact disc on places of Buddhist interest have been prepared for dissemination of information and are distributed through the Government of India Tourist Offices Overseas. In addition to this, the Ministry's website also has information on places of Buddhist interest in the country.